

## Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, September 29, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. M.G.B. Beinn Bhreagh, Victoria County, Cape Breton, N. S. (Sept. 29th, (1889) My dear Mrs. Bell:

I felt very sorry to think what a sad ending to the summer your's was, what a different home coming than you had anticipated. I shall miss Lizzie very much, her "nimble fingers" have been at my service too, how much greater then must be your and Mr. Bell's loss as well as her sisters'.

We have been living very quietly since you left. Alec went right back to the house-boat on his return from St. John and the children and I made him and Mr. McCurdy a little visit there which was enlivened (?) by a little fire which burned up Charles' tent and beds, and which was sufficiently brilliant and dangerous to threaten the whole boat and cause me to rush my children out in their nightgowns into the open air, while Charles and Johnny had to escape right through the flames with the loss of some of their clothing and singed hair, Johnny showed great presence of mind waking up from a sound sleep in the midst of flames, his first thought was of the kerosene can right by the fire, and these he secured. Mr. McCurdy worked hard and threw the last bucket full of water on just in time to prevent the flames reaching the awning, while Alec, who had been the first to discover the fire piped all hands to deck and acted captain.

The fire in the woods behind Crescent Grove occurred the day after the children's and my return from the house-boat and was fortunately limited in extent and reached no way near our house so that I had no opportunity to show those qualities of energy and presence of mind. Aileen seems to have credited me with. We were scared because had the wind veered and grown stronger the fire would have come directly in our direction, and I sent for Mr. McInnis who got hogsheads of salt water, numerous axes and buckets ready in

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case of need and then went back to his work. Our kitchen here is ornamented with four or five buckets and a couple of axes fastened upon the rafters on wall ready for use in case of an emergency, and this is our chief momento of the fire. Aileen came two weeks ago tomorrow and she and I had a few days together before going back to the house-boat. There we had a good time walking, canoeing, steaming, bathing and Aileen and Mr. McCurdy shooting. The water at Port Alexandra where the house-boat was is twenty feet deep, and before we left Elsie was swimming about there without rope or life-preserver. We felt quite proud of her. Since our return Alec and Mr. McCurdy have been very busy together up at the McNeil house which has been put into such good order that Mr. McInnis thinks he would like it himself. Alec and I went up all over the mountain and Alec now thinks that we can get plenty of good pure water anywhere on the mountain even at the top so that we are no longer limited in our choice of sites for our permanent home.

We are beginning to feel that we have left summer behind us, we had our last bath a week ago, and we are glad of a fire in the hall and warm blankets at night, still noon is always warm, and the children think their calicos warm enough. We are however, preparing for winter by having double windows made and sending for warm underclothing and furs. We have plenty of fine mackerel and 3 our partridges are delicious, I wish I could send you some. I don't know why partridges should remind me of flowers, but I take this opportunity to disclaim sending you any flowers to welcome you home. I sent some to Lizzie and wish very much I had thought of sending you some, but the graceful act was not mine but Mr. Hitz'. We hear of you from him occasionally, and I am so glad to know that you continue to maintain the strength you won here. I am frightfully strong for both today and yesterday I have been all along the mountain road on foot without fatigue.

Please give my love to Mr. Bell, Mary and Louisa, and believe me

Always your affectionate daughter, Mabel. Sept. 29th (1889)